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May 2, 2002

COMPASSIONATE CONSERVATISM SANS COMPASSION

President Bush Touts "Compassionate" Conservatism On Same Week He Proposes Increased Interest Rates On Student Loans And New Co-Payment for Medicare

On the same week that President Bush was touting his "compassionate" conservatism in California, his Administration was working behind the scenes on a callous proposal that would result in increased interest rates on student loans and a new co-payment for seniors in the Medicare program.

The President asserted Tuesday: "... we cannot have an indifferent government . We are a generous and caring people. We don't believe in a sink-or-swim society." But the Republican proposals seem to veer in another direction – increasing the burden on the middle-class and working poor while pushing through a \$2 trillion dollar tax break primarily for the wealthiest Americans.

The President proclaimed that, "Compassionate conservatism places great hope and confidence in public education." But where is the "compassion" in not allowing college students to reduce the interest on their student loans??? It was discovered this week that the Administration was proposing a plan to raise interest rates on federal student loans:

"The Bush administration has proposed ending fixed-rate consolidations of federal student loans just as interest rates are forecast to plunge to record lows. With lower interest rates, student borrowers could save thousands of dollars over the life of their loans.

[The Bush student loan proposal] would effectively raise interest rates for the estimated 700,000 borrowers who consolidate, or refinance their total federal student loan debt, each year." (*Washington Post*, 5/1/02)

The President went on to say, "Compassionate conservatism . . . [advocates] basic medical care for those in need, a better life for elderly Americans." But where is the compassion in the Republicans' proposal imposing a co-payment on Medicare recipients who need health care in their homes??? For the first time in the history of Medicare, Republicans want the most ill and vulnerable members of society to make out-of-pocket payments for home health care.

The GOP tax plan tried to hand \$254 million in tax breaks to Enron and then succeeded in handing \$2 trillion dollars in tax breaks primarily to the wealthiest of the wealthy. Billions in budget surpluses have dried up and the Social Security Trust Fund has been raided to the tune of \$1.8 trillion – due in large part to the fiscally irresponsible GOP tax cuts.

Democrats hope the Bush Administration will reevaluate these proposals – keeping them more in line with the message of "compassion" found in the President's speech.

outrage of the week